

Current Developments



July 10, 2003

From The State Conservationist - *Robert N. Jones*

With the summer months come an abundance of meetings. I've been in travel status for several weeks now. Not only does that give me the chance to promote the work of NRCS in Alabama, it also provides an opportunity to hear what other states are doing. As I listen to these reports, I'm proud of our conservation efforts.

The "retirement bulge" is taking its toll in Alabama. In the last six months, John Meetze, Ken Rogers, David Barrow, J. O. Norris, Bee Honey, and Doug Ward have retired. I want to express my appreciation to these employees for their many years of valuable service. Retirement is a natural phenomenon. All of us will eventually retire, the good Lord willing. Until

that time, we need to have good opportunities for advancement and training and a pleasant working environment for those of us who are still around. We must continually strive to do more to make NRCS an enjoyable place to work in order to retain and reward the employees we have. The retirement bulge will take away some of our knowledge base, but it will also offer opportunities for up and coming younger employees. I extend best wishes to recent retirees and encouragement to those of you still at the helm. I appreciate the contributions of each of you.

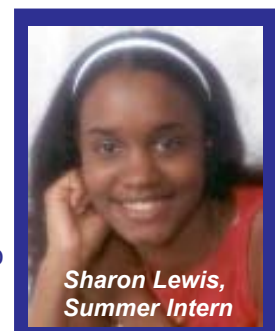
Bob

Summer Interns

According to Paul Swenson, the Alabama NRCS summer intern program is taking a bit of a different twist this year. NRCS has entered into an agreement with Tuskegee University's College of Agricultural, Environmental, and Natural Sciences and the Office of General Council (OGC) to employ a student to work with Craig Cornwell, Assistant Regional Attorney, in Montgomery. The partnership developed an opportunity for summer employment for a Tuskegee University student interested in pursuing a career in Environmental Law and Natural Resources. The internship will introduce the student to the legal workings in OGC, to the work of NRCS, and to activities associated with conserving natural

resources. Lewis Black, USDA Agricultural Liaison Officer at Tuskegee University, coordinated the application process; Sharon Lewis, a sophomore in the fall, was selected to fill the position.

Sharon is enjoying her experience in the OGC. She says, "I have acquired many new skills and knowledge. I am very happy that I am able to spend my summer working within this organization." The internship is beneficial to all entities. The program strengthens an existing alliance between NRCS and Tuskegee University, and provides another opportunity to recruit Tuskegee's graduates into the NRCS workforce.



*Sharon Lewis,
Summer Intern*

District Conservationist Emphasizes Wildlife

By Bill Hughes, Resource Conservationist, Auburn, AL

Like all District Conservationists, Zona Beaty in Tuskegee has to know a little about cropland, pastureland, livestock, forestry, and all other land uses to develop conservation plans. Wildlife is plentiful in Macon and Bullock Counties and landowners have shown a great interest in developing these resources for their own use and to sell hunting rights. As she works with landowners to develop conservation plans, she discusses wildlife alternatives and provides information about the Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) and the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) "at risk species" practices.

Zona has expanded this interest by advertising through the local newspapers, newsletters, and speaking to small groups about WHIP and "at risk species" parts of EQIP. Over the past four years, she has received over 60 applications requesting \$275,000 of WHIP funds. This year she has 21 applications being considered for WHIP and 4 applications for the "at risk species" part of EQIP. To date she has funded 18 contracts for over \$110,000.

We want to recognize Zona for her special effort in selling wildlife management and using the USDA programs to implement the conservation planning decisions of landowners in her counties.

Zona Beaty, left, discusses wildlife programs with landowner.



EWP Work in Marion County

by Lawayne Robinson, District Conservationist, Hamilton, AL

NRCS completed an Emergency Water Protection (EWP) project on the Buttahatchee River in cooperation with the Marion County Commission and Soil and Water Conservation District. The completed project, caused by heavy rains in April, stabilized 2,000 feet of eroding streambank upstream from a significant American Indian cultural site (1MR6) and a portion of the historic Jackson Trail (1MR509) where troops under the command of General Andrew Jackson crossed the river upon their return from the Battle of New Orleans (War of 1812). A grant from the Federal Highway Administration and the Alabama Department of

Transportation was awarded to the City of Hamilton to conduct a cultural resources survey to identify and protect significant cultural sites and to create trails for public access to the sites. These and other prehistoric and historic cultural sites were researched and investigated by archaeologists and historians from Panamerican Consultants, Inc. The Alabama Historical Commission concurred with the placement of the trails and the recommendation to protect these cultural sites.

The streambank's damage from the rain and the repair received significant interest of the local residents because the site is visible from U.S. Highway 43.



Southeast AgNet Coverage

by Julie A. Best, Public Affairs Specialist, Auburn, AL

Alabama has contracted with the Southeast AgNetwork, the only agricultural news outlet in Alabama, to promote programs and events related to NRCS activities. We plan to utilize the established farm news broadcasts to:

- Enhance information outreach efforts
- Target producers
- Provide grassroots outreach
- Promote various NRCS programs/events



This will be a great opportunity to reach a broader audience than we have in the past. To the right is a list of stations that will air Alabama NRCS PSAs.

To determine the effectiveness of this promotional venture, we need your help. Make a note and let us know in the Public Affairs Office (334-887-4549 or julie.best@al.usda.gov) if customers mention they heard about a program on the radio.

Alabama Affiliate Stations

County Coverage	Station	City	Format	Power	Freq
Houston/Geneva/Henry/Dale/Coffee/Covington/Bay, FL Jackson, FL/Calhoun, FL/Walton, FL/Washington, FL Holmes, FL	WDJR-FM	Dothan	Country	100,000	96.9
Covington/Coffee/Geneva/Crenshaw/Okaloosa, FL	WAMI-FM	Opp	Country	3,400	102.3
Covington/Coffee/Geneva	WAMI-AM	Opp	Country	1,000	860
Pike/Barbour/Coffee/Bullock/Crenshaw/Dale/Montgomery	WTBF-AM	Troy	Country	5,000	970
Pike/Coffee/Montgomery/Dale/Crenshaw/Barbour/Bullock	WTBF-FM	Troy	Country	25,000	94.7
Escambia/Baldwin/Mobile/Escambia, FL/Santa Rosa, FL	WYDH-FM	Atmore	Country	6,000	105.9
Dallas/Montgomery/Perry/Wilcox/Lowndes/Hale/Autauga Monroe/Butler/Chilton/Bibb/Elmore/Marengo	WDXX-FM	Selma	Country	50,000	100.1
Dallas/Autauga/Lowndes	WHBB-AM	Selma	Oldies	1,000	1490
Cherokee/DeKalb/Calhoun/Cleburne/Etowah/Talladega St. Clair/Marshall	WEIS-AM	Centre	Country	1,000	990
Limestone/Madison/Morgan/Lawrence/Lauderdale	WKAC-AM	Athens	Country	5,000	1080
Jackson/DeKalb/Madison/Marshall/Etowah/Cherokee Jackson/Dade, GA	WKEA-FM WKEA-AM	Scottsboro Bridgeport	Country Country	6,000 1,000	98.3 1480
Conecuh/Monroe/Escambia/Butler/Covington/Crenshaw Santa Rosa, FL/Okaloosa, FL	WPGG-FM	Evergreen	Country	100,000	93.3
Clarke/Washington/Monroe/Choctaw	WBMH-FM	Grove Hill	Country	12,000	106.1
Cullman/Blount/Morgan/Lawrence/Winston Jefferson/Walker/Marshall	WKUL-FM	Cullman	Country	6,000	92.1
Marengo/Hale/Dallas/Perry/Choctaw/Wilcox Monroe/Greene/Sumter/Clarke	WINL-FM	Linden	Country	100,000	98.5
Monroe/Conecuh/Butler/Wilcox/Escambia/Clarke	WMFC-FM	Monroeville	Oldies	30,000	99.3
Monroe	WMFC-AM	Monroeville	Oldies	1,000	1360
Baldwin/Escambia, FL	WDXZ-AM	Robertsdale	Country	1,000	1,000
Elmore/Montgomery/Coosa/Tallapoosa	WTLS-AM	Tallassee	Variety	1,250	1300
Barbour/Bullock/Henry/Russell/Quitman, GA	WULA-AM	Eufaula	A/C	1,000	1240

Soil Judging Teams Win Honors

by Julie A. Best, Public Affairs Specialist, Auburn, AL

Congratulations to Alabama's soil judging teams--high school and collegiate!

The Auburn University team claimed the title as the 2003 National Collegiate Soil Judging Champions in national competition held in early April at Texas A&M University. The last time Auburn placed first in the competition was 1986.

Alabama NRCS is reaping the benefits from what the team members have learned. Three members of the AU soil judging team will be working for us. Deana Lasater, a recent graduate, is a soil conservationist in the Guntersville Field Office (FO); two other team members will be doing summer internships with the agency. Bryan Stone will be working in the Tuskegee FO and Ellen Knight is assigned to the Opelika FO.



The Auburn University Soil Judging team is the 2003 National Collegiate Soil Judging Champions



Millry High School – Washington County Landjudging Team placed 6th in the Nation out of 140 Teams

This year, Washington County's

Millry High School won the Southeast Regional Land Judging Contest and placed sixth at the National Contest in Oklahoma City. This is a huge accomplishment! Alabama has never even come close to placing in the top echelon of the national contest.

Special thanks go out to Joey Shaw, soil liaison at Auburn University; Ken Johnson, coordinator of the high school program; and the students from both teams, for a job well done!

Treasure Forest Landowners Meeting

By Steve Musser, Resource Conservationist, Auburn, AL

Approximately 60 landowners gathered in Pike County at the Halsey Dairy Farm recently to view Halsey's silvopasture management. Pike County NRCS District Conservationist Randy Hale introduced the Halseys to the concept. The Halseys relocated their dairy from central Michigan to Pike County two years ago. Some of the Bahia pastures on the farm had been planted to pine trees about 14 years prior to purchase. They worked with a local forester to thin 50 ft. wide openings so they could use the area for their rotational grazing system. The openings are producing good quality forage for their cattle as well as continuing to produce high quality trees. The nutrients from the cattle manures and fertilizers applied to grass contribute to faster tree growth. Research indicates that this system will produce more cubic feet of high quality wood per acre than a solid stand of trees. The group was impressed by what the Halsey's have done since they purchased the farm and made a presentation thanking them for sharing their experience.



Environmental Quality Incentive Program “Final Rule”

by Alice Love, Farm Bill Specialist, Auburn, AL

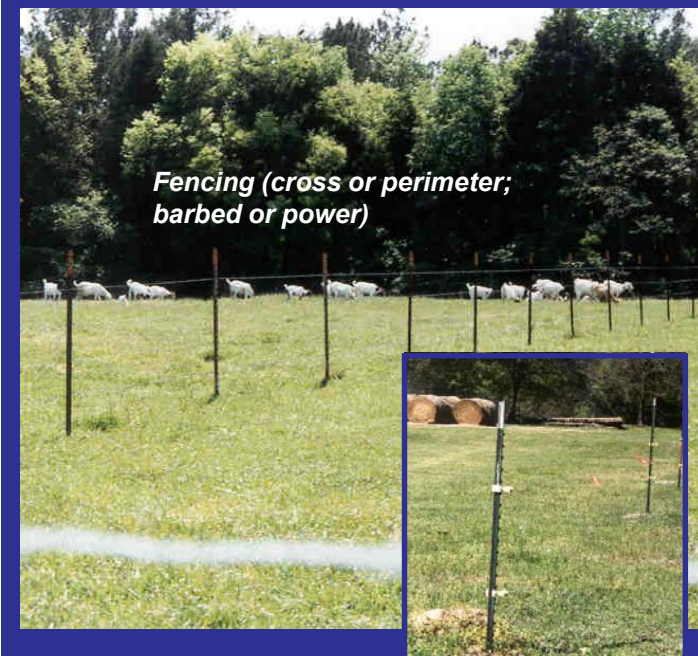
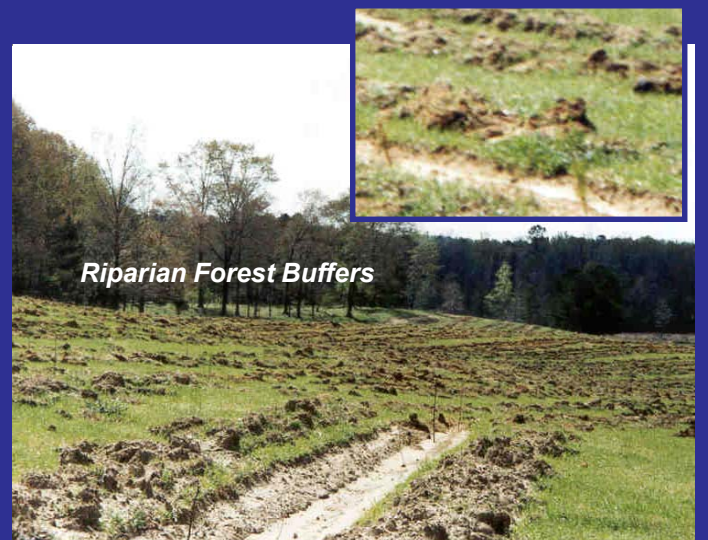
The Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) final rule was published in the Federal Register on May 30, 2003. This final rule can be viewed at: www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/eqip/.

As you view this rule, focus on the many conservation practices available to assist landusers with their farming operations. This bill is designed to conserve and maintain our country's natural resources.

Alabama will be receiving over \$8 million to fund new EQIP contracts during FY 2003. Approved contracts will provide cost-share assistance to eligible stewards who implement structural and management conservation practices. These key practices address resource concerns such as erosion control on agricultural lands, grazing systems, water quality, water conservation, and at-risk wildlife species.

EQIP conservation practices installed on agricultural lands through Alabama NRCS from previous EQIP sign-up/approved contracts are:

- Pasture and hayland planting
- Fencing
- Riparian Forest Buffers
- Watering/Well facility



RC&D Council Annual Meeting

The 12th annual meeting of the Alabama Association of Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) Councils was held in Monroeville in May. ALA-TOM RC&D Council served as host. The nine council areas presented highlights of the past year and the accomplishments are outstanding. The implemented projects are valued at more than \$15 million. NRCS State Conservationist Bob Jones said, "It is a pleasure to be a part of the RC&D program in Alabama. The projects of our nine councils are unique to their respective areas. Alabama is always recognized as a leader in the southeast."

The rich heritage of Monroe County was emphasized at the meeting. Participants saw a live production of Monroeville author Harper Lee's

Pulitzer winning novel, "To Kill a Mockingbird." They also had a choice of tours: Monroe County historical sites or the St. Stephens/Old Lock 1 Park in Washington County.

Outstanding accomplishment awards were presented. Mike Roden was recognized as the RC&D Coordinator of the Year.



Mike Roden (r) is presented RC&D Coordinator of the Year award by Robert Harbison

According to program manager Mason Dollar, "Mike Roden is a model RC&D coordinator as exemplified by the balanced program his council accomplished in 2002. Mike guided the council to successfully complete 19 water quality projects and 25 rural economic development projects

while integrating the support of 18 active state, federal, and private partners."

Migratory Bird Conservation

by Foy Kirkland, District Conservationist, Hartselle, AL

The Wildlife Habitat Council and Central Hardwoods Bird Conservation Region are working with the local conservation partnership in Morgan County to develop habitat improvement projects for priority bird species. The "Corporate Campaign for Migratory Bird Conservation" seeks to enhance habitat for birds on corporate land and to foster public-private partnerships. One of the first projects is focused on land owned by several corporations along the Tennessee River between Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge and the City of Decatur to the west, and the Mallard Fox Wildlife Management Area to the east. Partners include 3M, British Petroleum (BP), Vulcan Materials, and Nucor Steel. NRCS, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Alabama Department of Natural Resources are providing technical expertise; and the Decatur City Planner, the Morgan County Environmental Education Foundation, the Morgan County SWCD, and a representative from a local Boy Scouts group, are working with the group.

A "Vision Plan" for the corridor was developed in the spring of 2003, and targets acreage to be converted from

crop and exotic grassland to native grass/forbs conservation. The first phase of work includes conversion of fescue and weed fields on 3M, BP, and Nucor lands to native warm-season grass-forbs mixtures to provide habitat for grassland birds; tree thinning and prescribed burns on land surrounding the Vulcan Quarry to provide habitat for grass-shrub land birds; and thinning or removing invasive privet in the forest along the Tennessee River to improve the stopover habitat for migrating forest birds. These habitats will add to sites that the public can visit along the northern Alabama birding trail, which is being developed and promoted by the Alabama Department of Natural Resources.



Phillip Wirey, 3M (l) and Foy Kirkland, NRCS, review migratory bird habitat improvement options for 3M Corporate land.

Quail Habitat Improvement Efforts in Houston County

By Joe Wilson, District Conservationist, Dothan, AL

Houston County has a history of having excellent quail population and habitat. Quail was once abundant throughout the county.

Those times are gone. The numbers of quail have been drastically reduced. Some people have no memory of seeing native wild quail. Loss of habitat played a major part in the demise of the quail and



it continues to be a major roadblock in the efforts to increase quail numbers.

After gathering input from many concerned landowners, agencies, and farmers, a decision was made to attempt to reestablish quail habitat in

Houston County. The Farm Service Agency, Houston County SWCD, and NRCS are providing an opportunity to make a difference for the landowners in the county.

Currently, a landowner can sign up for technical and cost-share assistance in three programs to establish quail habitat. The Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) provides assistance for establishment

and an annual rental payment for long leaf pines, native grasses and shrubs, and early successional habitat.

NRCS is currently accepting applications for a special emphasis Quail Habitat Improvement Program through EQIP. This program

provides for the development of wildlife conservation plans, cost-share assistance, and

technical guidance in establishing and developing quail habitat. This habitat may include long leaf pines, native grasses, wildlife shrubs, field borders, hedgerows, and early successional vegetation. In addition to increasing the quail population, a broad range of other wildlife species will also benefit.

Soon, hopefully Houston County will again be known for its quail habitat. Landowners and the environment will benefit from the wildlife habitat that will support a broad range of species needing food, nesting, and shelter.



Engineering News

In June, Perry Oakes presented a paper at the National Watershed Coalition meeting in Council Bluffs, Iowa. The paper entitled "Dam Maintenance Without Regulation" is a success story of Alabama's WSI (Watershed Structure Improvement) Program administered by the Coosa Valley RC&D. Jeff Holloway and Glen Hawkins are co-authors.

Perry also serves as the southeast representative for two national efforts, the EBAAG (Engineering Business Area Advisory Group) and the Engineering Software Development Team. Nationally

they are converting some of the more widely used engineering software to the Windows base. Just released and approved on the CCE certified software site is the software "Hydraulics Formulas". All of the commonly used hydraulics calculations done by engineers and technicians can be accomplished with this software in a user friendly Windows environment. The hydraulics formula software will be loaded as computers are converted to Windows XP. Other software will be issued soon.

From The Field

News from Lawrence McGhee in Iraq

May 15 - I'm doing fine in Southern Iraq and taking it one day at a time. (It is) just hot and dusty, 117 degrees today. Through it all, I'm still blessed. Tell the NRCS family and the Soil Survey family "hello and keep praying." You all are outstanding friends and co-workers. Keep sending the prayers.

Take care and I look forward to messages to this address: lawrence.mcghee1@us.army.mil

Chambers County Forestry Planning Committee

Tours Norbord By Rhoda Kerr, Soil Con Tech

The Chambers County Forestry Planning Committee and local forestry representatives toured the Nexfor Norbord Oriented Strand Board (OSB) Mill in May. Norbord thanked the forestry group for being part of the community that has welcomed them and provided the history and outlined the operations of the mill. Norbord indicated that 850,000 tons or 320,000 cords of southern pine are required to sustain its annual production. The wood is sourced within a 70 mile radius of the mill from land designated for timber production. The majority of the land is owned by individual farmers.

The group saw the state-of-the-art process of producing 4'x8' (7/16") panels and specialty products such as 4'x9' and 4'x10' panels and webstock.

The Chambers County Forestry Planning Committee sponsors events and tours annually to further their own knowledge, to educate the public, and to promote the forest industry in the county.

EWP Projects Completed

Two federally funded projects to repair two gullies that were threatening Jackson roadways were completed recently. The projects were funded through the Emergency Watershed Program (EWP). The damage stemmed from a severe storm that occurred about a year ago.

Water Festival

The Autauga County NRCS/SWCD participated in a Water Festival in May. About 500 county fourth graders participated in activities such as the Edible Aquifer, The Incredible Journey, and A Drop in the Bucket. The Fishin' Magician, the entertainment for the day, was a huge hit with the students and adults! Over 100 volunteers assisted with the program, some of them were our own Earth Team Volunteers.

Winston County NRCS Keeps Public Informed

By District Conservationist Lawayne Robinson

On May 20, I met with about 38 forest landowners to give them a brief overview of the WHIP program. A wildlife biologist with the Alabama Game and Fish was the featured speaker. The meeting was a joint effort by the Marion County Forestry Planning Committee and the Marion County chapter of the TREASURE Forest Association.

I've recently accepted a WHIP application from a several-hundred-acre church camp in Winston County. Even if WHIP is not funded, the input will be used in management plans. The camp is seeking assistance from several agencies.

I am developing plans for a grazing system on a 1,250 acre farm in Winston County. The land was part of the original Bankhead Forest. The U.S. Forest Service later traded the land for other land and the land was strip mined. It has been reclaimed and being developed into a cattle farm.

On May 22, Soil Conservation Technician Rusty Bull was the featured speaker at the Winston County chapter of the TREASURE Forest Association. He spoke to about 25 attendees on pond construction and management. The meeting was held at the farm of a local Helene Mosley award winner.



Chambers County Forestry Planning Commission tours Norbord facility.

Retiree News

From Jesse Bush

The Spring 2003 meeting was held in Tuscaloosa and featured a tour of the area, arranged by retiree Don Presley. We enjoyed the time together.

The next retirees meeting will be September 18-19, 2003, in Auburn (an open date for Auburn football). Mark your calendar, adjust your schedule, and make your plans to attend!

Retirees, if you wish to receive a letter with specific details about upcoming meetings and are not on the mailing list, please send info to Charles Bush, 502 Overlook Drive, Opelika, Alabama 36801, or email cgbush@mindspring.com.

RC&D News

Coosa Valley RC&D Council

Woodland Walking Track - Forward March!

Woodland Senior Citizen Center participants are not wasting any time using the new walking track. This is one of the many items along with new playing fields, fencing, etc., that you will see when you visit the Woodland Sports Complex. The Town of Woodland received funds from the Coosa Valley RC&D Council for "seed" money to develop the paved track. This was a joint effort with the local County Commission, SWCD, and the Department of Economic and Community Affairs.



Four of the department representatives who received the tapes are (from left) Rayford Edmondson of Lake Wedowee New Volunteer Fire Department (FFD), Buddy Holloway of Woodland VFD, Thomas Langley of Wedowee VFD, and Pete Stewart of Wadley VFD.

Fire Prevention Educational Materials - Coosa Valley RC&D Council provided funds to purchase a set of tapes that were distributed to 18 fire departments within the county. Charlie Wise, Alabama Forestry Commission, acquired the sets containing five video tapes on various topics such as "Building a Fire Wise Home," "Making Your Home Fire Wise," "Wildfire Control," and "Focus on Wildland Fire." The topic of the fifth tape varied among the different fire departments. Wise distributed the tapes at an association meeting held at the Rock Stand Fire Department.

Cawaco RC&D Council

In keeping with the "Smart Growth" concept, the Cawaco RC&D has relocated in a downtown Birmingham building that was originally built in 1896 by Anhauser-Busch as a brewery/warehouse/stable. In 2003 the building was renovated/recycled by Sloss Realty and is currently the Regional Center for Planning and Design. No green spaces were harmed in the remodeling of this office building.

Ala-Tom RC&D Council

Ala-Tom RC&D has addressed the issue of how a small town can afford professional urban forestry technical assistance. The answer came in the form of a "shared services" program for the entire Ala-Tom RC&D area supported with contributions from participating towns and communities. The program provides quality urban forestry services to small communities that wouldn't have access to an urban forester.

Personnel

Accessions

Renea Dyer, Soil Conservationist,
Andalusia, AL
Shane King, Agricultural Engineer,
Oxford, AL
Deana Lasater, Soil
Conservationist,
Guntersville, AL
Dana Sullivan, Soil
Conservationist,
Russellville, AL

Promotions

Chandra Berry, District
Conservationist, Columbiana,
AL to RC&D Coordinator,
NRCS, Nashville, TN
Timothy Carnley, Soil Conservation
Technician, New Brockton, AL
Grant Gordy, Soil Conservation
Technician, Marion, AL
Charles Love, State Soil Scientist/
MLRA Leader, Auburn, AL
Stephen Stone, Soil
Conservationist, Wedowee, AL
to District Conservationist,
Wedowee, AL
Jennifer Wells, Soil
Conservationist, Dothan, AL

Transfer In

John Curtis, District
Conservationist, NRCS,
Murphy, NC to District
Conservationist, Phenix
City, AL

Reassignment

Jeffery Allred, Agricultural
Engineer, Auburn, AL to
Agricultural Engineer,
Decatur, AL

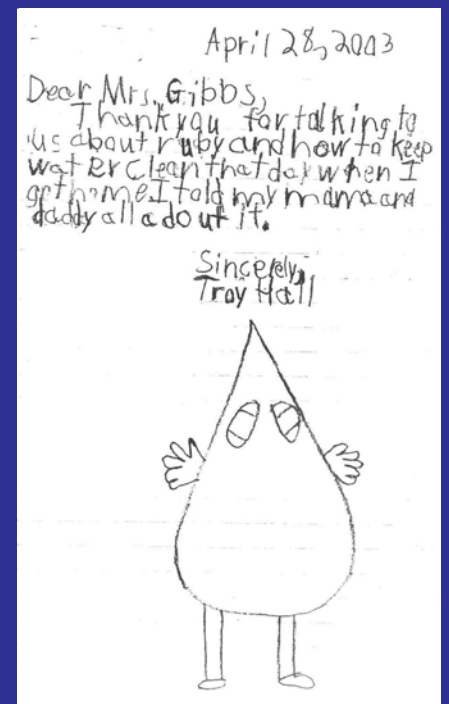
Retirements

Ken Rogers, Agronomist,
Auburn, AL
Douglas Ward, RC&D Coordinator,
Ozark, AL

Summer Interns

Jamal Austin, Scottsboro, Alabama
A&M University
Kendrick Flowers, Athens,
Alabama A&M University
Trumaine Jackson, Linden,
Alabama A&M University
Terrence Mobley, Huntsville,
Alabama A&M University
Ellen Knight, Opelika, Auburn
University
Brian Stone, Tuskegee, Auburn
University
Matt Wilson, Troy, Auburn
University

Curtis Fluker, Mobile, Tuskegee
University
Amanda Zelasko, Alexander City,
Southern Illinois University
Sharon Lewis, USDA/Office of
General Council, Montgomery,
Tuskegee University
(administrative support
provided by NRCS)
Nicholas McGhee, Brewton,
Escambia County High School



Proof that Ruby Raindrop is an important conservation education tool. Keep up the good work Ruby!



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